

Message Text

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54

ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-02 DODE-00

IO-13 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00 SS-15 NSCE-00

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O 292050Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9255

PANCANAL IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO IMMEDIATE

USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0574

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6768

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: CONTINUED ARREST OF AMERICAN CITIZEN, PVT. BERNARD
LOWELL JAMISON

REF: A. PANAMA 6465 B. PANAMA 6503 C. PANAMA 6545

SUMMARY: DESPITE PROTESTS FROM HIGH-LEVEL U.S. MILITARY
AUTHORITIES TO GUARDIA NACIONAL OFFICIALS, AND FROM AMBASSADOR
TO PRESIDENT LAKAS, AMERICAN CITIZEN, PVT. BERNARD LOWELL
JAMISON, ARRESTED SEPTEMBER 15 ON PATENTLY FALSE PRETEXTS,
IS STILL BEING HELD IN THE CITY JAIL. END SUMMARY.

1. PVT. BERNARD L. JAMISON WAS ARRESTED BY GUARDIA NACIONAL
(GN) PERSONNEL ON SEPTEMBER 15 NEAR THE SCENE OF THAT DAY'S
STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS (SEE REF C FOR REPORT OF ARREST
CIRCUMSTANCES). ON SEPTEMBER 17 JAMISON WAS FINGERED IN LOCAL
PRESS AS ONE OF THE SUPPOSED U.S. "INTELLIGENCE AGENTS"
IMPLICATED IN THE GOP'S TRUMPED-UP "DESTABILIZATION PLAN"
(SEE REFTEL A AND B).

2. EMBASSY DID NOT KNOW JAMISON HAD NOT BEEN SEEN BY
U.S. MILITARY OFFICIALS (THE NORMAL--AND NORMALLY
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EFFECTIVE--CHANNEL FOR DEALING WITH U.S. SERVICEMEN

ARRESTED IN PANAMA) UNTIL MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20. JAMISON WAS SEEN BY THE USSOUTHCOM PROVOST MARSHAL, COL. JAMES F. RUSSELL, ON THAT DAY AFTER LATTER MADE PERSONAL PROTEST TO GN G-2 LT. COL. NORIEGA (SEE REF C). JAMISON WAS NOT SEEN FROM SEPTEMBER 20 UNTIL TODAY, SEPTEMBER 29 DESPITE REPEATED ATTEMPTS BY MILITARY OFFICIALS TO DO SO.

3. AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE CASE WITH PRESIDENT LAKAS ON SEPTEMBER 25. TO AMBASSADOR'S STRONG PROTEST, PRESIDENT RESPONDED THAT U.S. INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS SHOULD TAKE UP THE ARREST WITH LT. COL. NORIEGA'S OFFICE.

4. PROVOST MARSHALL SPOKE TO NORIEGA PERSONALLY ON SEPTEMBER 27 TO PROTEST IN STRONGEST TERMS THE CONTINUED ARREST AND INCOMMUNICADO STATUS OF JAMISON. NORIEGA FINALLY SAID THAT JAMISON'S CASE WAS "OUT OF HIS HANDS" AND IN THOSE OF GENERAL TORRIJOS. ON SEPTEMBER 28 AN OFFICIAL FROM THE PROVOST MARSHAL'S OFFICE MADE YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT THROUGH NORIEGA'S OFFICE TO SEEK JAMISON'S RELEASE. HE GOT NOWHERE. INSTEAD, NORIEGA'S DEPUTY, MAJOR FERRUFINO, TOLD THIS OFFICIAL THAT "FOREIGN MINISTER BOYD HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH TORRIJOS, AND THEY HAVE SPOKEN TO WASHINGTON, D.C. AND THAT BOYD WAS CHARGED WITH RESOLVING THE AFFAIR WITHIN 48 HOURS". (COMMENT:NEITHER MILITARY NOR EMBASSY OFFICIALS UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MESSAGE MEANS. END COMMENT).

5. AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 28 AMBASSADOR RAISED ISSUE ONCE AGAIN WITH THE PRESIDENT. LAKAS TOLD AMBASSADOR HE WOULD TAKE IT UP WITH TORRIJOS. LATE THAT EVENING EMBASSY MILGRP OFFICER SPOKE WITH NORIEGA'S DEPUTY AND WAS TOLD THAT MILGRP OFFICER WOULD BE PERMITTED TO SEE JAMISON THE NEXT DAY. MILGRP OFFICER DID SEE JAMISON THIS MORNING. HE REPORTED THAT JAMISON WAS IN GOOD HEALTH, BUT HAD NOT RECEIVED THE U.S. MEALS NORMALLY SENT TO U.S. MILITARY PRISONERS BY PROVOST MARSHAL, AND HAD BEEN INTERROGATED AT LENGTH YESTERDAY BY A G-2 OFFICER.

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6. POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON SEPTEMBER 28 TOLD ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER OZORES THAT GOP'S CONTINUED HOLDING OF JAMISON WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE USG AND A POTENTIALLY GRAVE PROBLEM IN U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS. OZORES PROMISED TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO SECURE JAMISON'S RELEASE.

7. COMMENT: EMBASSY REGARDS THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF JAMISON--AN
18-YEAR OLD GI FROM HARLEM WHO IS APPARENTLY INNOCENT OF ANY
WRONGDOING--AS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER. WE ARE INSISTING THAT
JAMISON BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY.

JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PANAMA06768
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760367-1129
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976097/aaaaafwz.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SCS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 PANAMA 6465
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2004 by woolflhd>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONTINUED ARREST OF AMERICAN CITIZEN, PVT. BERNARD LOWELL JAMISON
TAGS: CASC, PFOR, PN, US, (JAMISON, BERNARD LOWELL)
To: STATE PANCANAL
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006